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AUTHOR Newman, George Charles
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ABSTRACT

This report examines how the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) process might be utilized in an institutional research format to bring about future formalized assessment and planning in undergraduate and graduate teacher education. With the focus on the recent NCATE reaccreditation process at the University of Michigan's School of Education, this report first examines the accreditation process an institution undergoes in order to determine the quality of its programs, and second, develops a framework and rationale whereby the information compiled for accrediting purposes can be further utilized by the institution to evaluate itself. The data contained in an NCATE study represent institutional information that can be analyzed further to serve as the basis for decision-making and for the evaluation of teachers. The objective of institutional research is to utilize data or manage information so that it can be evaluated and used to plan institutional change. The differences, then, between accreditation and institutional research lie in the fact that accrediting institutions such as NCATE are mainly concerned with evaluating procedural data and comparing it with prescribed and established standards, whereas institutional research is a way of gathering data on the various components of an institution and then managing or analysing it in order to make a realistic design concerning the present or the future of the institution. NCATE hopes that the data accumulated through its accreditation process will in the future be used for institutional research and self-study. (MM)

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by George Charles Newman

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
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NCATE: A Study of the Accreditation Process

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The purpose of this article is, first, to examine the accreditation process an institution undergoes in order to determine the quality of its programs and, second, to develop a framework and rationale whereby the information compiled for accrediting purposes can be further utilized by the institution to evaluate itself. This report will focus on the recent NCATE (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education) reaccreditation process at the School of Education, examining the data which were collected and proposing ways in which they could be better utilized by schools of education.

What is accrediting? Perhaps the most standard definition is that promoted by William K. Seldon, chairman of the National Commission on Accrediting:

> Accrediting is the process whereby an organization or agency recognizes a college or university or a program of study as having met certain pre-determined qualifications or standards.[1]

Accreditation is therefore a method of protecting the public by identifying quality institutions and helping to maintain and raise institutional standards. Professional schools depend to a large extent on approval by their national accrediting associations, for graduates of programs which are not nationally accredited have a difficult time securing employment. The accreditation movement in the United States has had a long and conflict-ridden history, but for all of its merits and demerits, nongovernmental accreditation is a continuing process in the educational network.

NCATE

NCATE is a nonprofit, semi-autonomous, voluntary "professional association or . . . professional accrediting agency [which] exists to assure the public that a quality program to prepare a certain type of professional person exists at an institution."[2] It has been authorized by the National Commission on Accrediting to adopt standards and procedures for accreditation and to determine the accreditation status of institutional programs, both undergraduate and graduate, which prepare teachers and other school personnel.[3] NCATE's functions include the following:

- Provides standards for accreditation;
- Requires institutional self-studies;
- Directs visiting teams in on-campus evaluation of teacher education programs;
- Evaluates programs in the areas of curriculum, faculty, students, resources, and product evaluation, and accredits those which meet minimum national standards;
- Reviews accredited programs every ten years;
- Publishes an Annual List of Accredited Institutions;
- Maintains channels of communication for groups interested in teacher education.[4]

NCATE operates through a council of 22 members either appointed or elected from the five major teacher education units — the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, the Council of Chief State School Officers, the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification, the National Commission on Teacher Education and Professional Standards, and the National School Boards Association. The council is responsible for evaluating teacher education according to the standards established by NCATE, and all institutions with accredited teacher education programs and those who wish to apply for NCATE accreditation must abide by these standards. The council reports to a coordinating board whose membership is composed of appointments from the five constituent organizations on the council; the coordinating board is responsible for the adoption of standards, the formulation of budgets, and the development of policies relating to accreditation.[5]

Two sets of standards are used by NCATE in the accreditation process — one for basic programs of teacher training and the other for advanced programs. Basic programs are undergraduate teacher preparation programs; advanced programs include all those beyond the baccalaureate degree.[6] Any four-year or graduate institution is eligible for an accreditation evaluation by NCATE if it offers programs which prepare teachers or professional school personnel. The institution must also be approved by its state department of education, accredited by the regional association in its area, and have graduated a sufficient number of students so that NCATE can make a fair and adequate evaluation of the program.

School of Education NCATE Accreditation, 1974

NCATE reaccredits institutions and teacher education programs every ten years; the School of Education's decision to seek reaccreditation was initiated in 1972. At that time, the assistant dean of instruction attended the annual meeting of NCATE to gather information on NCATE evaluation procedures. Shortly thereafter, the School established an NCATE Steering Committee for the purpose of "advising, counseling, and assisting the development of the self-study document and the arrangements for the visiting team."[7]

A year and a half before the NCATE visitation, the assistant dean of instruction attended a second NCATE meeting which dealt with orientation, clarification of the standards, and procedures for preparing the self-study. The School of Education made a concerted effort to involve as many faculty and administrative staff as possible in preparing the institutional self-study. A steering committee of five faculty members was appointed to assist the dean and his staff in coordinating the effort, and an administrative aide was employed to gather and prepare the self-study with the assistance of the assistant dean for research. Approximately eight months prior to the NCATE visit, a rough draft of the self-study was completed and distributed to the faculty and staff for suggestions, additions, or corrections. During the next four months a final draft was prepared and submitted to the chairman and members of the NCATE visitation team. Six weeks before the site visit, the team chairman met with School of Education administrators for a briefing of the evaluation procedures and review of the self-study.[8]

The NCATE team visitation to evaluate the teacher education program occurred in January, 1974. During the three-day evaluation, the NCATE team met and interviewed faculty, administrators, staff, and undergraduate and graduate students. The visitation team, selected jointly by the University and NCATE, was composed of thirteen persons. Besides reviewing the self-study and School of Education personnel, the team interviewed faculty and administrators from the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts; School of Music; School of Architecture and Design; Rackham Graduate School; and the central administration. The final evaluation was written as a reaction report, and favorable recognition of the teacher training program was acted upon by the NCATE council in the spring of 1974.

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Chuck Newman is presently the director of library-media services and assistant dean at Golden West College in Huntington Beach, California. He is also a doctoral candidate in the Center for the Study of Higher Education. His interest in accreditation has proved to be useful since Golden West College is currently preparing for a Western States accreditation visit.

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The Self-Study

NCATE standards, as presented in the "Guide for Preparing the Institutional Report,"[9] are intended to help an institution organize and document its teacher training programs fairly and accurately. An institution is allowed, however, to vary its data collection and is encouraged to include additional information directly related to the evaluation of its teacher education programs, which are separated in the institutional self-study into undergraduate and graduate sections. The NCATE Evaluation Board, responsible for developing the Guide, requests that institutions divide the report into sections and chapters but in a manner that includes the appropriate information which an NCATE visiting team member can easily find, understand, and evaluate. Institutions are encouraged to include an appropriate amount of analytical data concerning students, graduates, programs, resources, and faculty for comparative purposes and for general monitoring reasons. NCATE is interested in the quality of teacher education programs; its intention is not to look for specific inadequacies but to encourage institutions to describe the characteristics of their programs using the standards as guidelines.

For both undergraduate and graduate programs NCATE's standards are concerned with five major areas — curriculum; faculty; students; resources and facilities; and evaluation, program review, and planning. The important sections in the area of curriculum deal with teaching and learning theory, laboratory and clinical experience, and coordination of basic programs. In the area of faculty, the competence and utilization of faculty and faculty involvement with schools are crucial. The important parts of the section on students are the counseling and advising for students in basic and advanced programs and student participation in program evaluation and development. In the area of resources, library and physical facilities are important. Evaluation of graduates, use of evaluation results to improve basic and advanced programs, and long-range planning are significant aspects of the section on evaluation, program review, and planning.

The NCATE Reaction

The NCATE team visits the institution to determine whether or not it "has reported accurately about itself for the . . . evaluation."[10] In its evaluation of a teacher education program, the team looks for two types of reporting errors — errors of omission and of presentation. There are specific steps which the visiting team must follow in evaluating both undergraduate and graduate programs in order to assure fairness and completeness in forming a total evaluation: It must clarify the scope of the accreditation visit, identify the programs "ineligible" for evaluation, and assess the institutional self-study. Each team member is responsible for evaluating particular program units and presenting his findings to the chairman of the team, who coordinates the visitation.

This information is presented to the institution in a critique or reaction report which discusses the undergraduate and graduate programs separately. The NCATE reaction focuses on leadership dynamics; sense of purpose and direction; vitality and creativity of faculty and student body; commitment to quality teacher education; and curriculum formation.[11] NCATE is mainly concerned with the following qualities in advanced programs:

1. General characteristics of the graduate effort at the institution.
2. Specific characteristics, defined by several standards as these relate to the individual program.
3. Evidence that the institution is evaluating the competence of its product and is using evaluation results in further conceptualizing its program offerings.[12]

The 1974 NCATE evaluation of the School of Education is for the most part quite favorable, and the School has been fully granted reaccreditation for teacher education programs in both the basic and advanced divisions. The rating scales utilized were collectively interpreted for the undergraduate program to be adequate if not excellent (2 percent of the 350 responses were below adequate); for the graduate program 95 percent of the ratings were adequate, with 2/3 of the ratings "good" or "excellent." The general consensus of the NCATE team was that The University of Michigan is effective in teacher education programs and in most respects superior to many other institutions. This does not mean that the School of Education was judged completely adequate without areas which need to be clarified and improved; the NCATE reaction points out several critical issues (strengths and weaknesses) for the institution to study further. In terms of undergraduate preparation, the following areas were emphasized in the critique:

1. Lack of effective communication and coordination between the School of Education and other divisions and departments of the University.
2. Lack of clear input by students in the School's decision-making process.
3. Lack of follow-up or implementation of the data on recent undergraduate characteristics which are contained in the alumni study.
4. Lack of sufficient supervisory personnel in practicum and student-teaching programs.
5. Inadequate counseling or student involvement with faculty in advising.
6. Heavy load imposed on some faculty.[13]

With regard to the graduate programs, the NCATE reaction report focused on the following:

1. Lack of sufficient information or of an attempt to gather information on graduate program characteristics.
2. Heavy load on some faculty, hindering their full development.
3. No follow-up of graduates of graduate programs in terms of the type of employment they are seeking and are able to secure or in terms of job mobility.
4. Need for better distinction between Ph.D. and the few Ed.S. programs.
5. Need for more service-oriented programs in the school personnel field.
6. Questionable existence of specialist and sixth-year programs.
7. Lack of sufficient financial support to enact many new programs as well as to upgrade existing areas of concern.
8. Some graduate areas need more faculty.[14]

The preceding synopsis of the NCATE team evaluation is general; much of it can be extrapolated from the data presented in the School's institutional self-study. Many of the issues were known to the School (staff and faculty) long before the NCATE critique. The value of such a reaction report, however, lies in the fact that it has been documented by an objective, unbiased body which represents teacher education nationally.

SUMMARY

Program evaluation and long-range planning are becoming a part of higher education decision making. Gone is the process whereby persons (faculty or administrators) made decisions by tradition and premonition. Higher education experts are turning instead to new, sophisticated management techniques to obtain the necessary information for decision making. The information collected by a school provides a rationale for existing programs and a representation of program characteristics for NCATE approval and accreditation purposes. Paul Dressell states as follows:

> The adjective comprehensive is sometimes conjoined with self-study to imply all-inclusive examination of the total operations, programs, and goals of an institution. Such an extensive

effort may be a prelude to planning or a synonym for it. It may be undertaken as a requirement for accreditation or a major foundation grant. When the goal is the attainment or preservation of accreditation or the attainment of a grant, success in attaining the goal too often is the signal for filing and forgetting the self-study. In both circumstances, the study is done under pressure and may be aimed more at attaining the immediate goal than at studying the institution in any fundamental way. Even so, a successful comprehensive self-study is truly a major effort in data collection, assessment of strengths and weaknesses, reexamination of goals, and detailed analysis of present and needed resources.[13]

The information collected in a school's institutional self-study represents quantitative data which can be utilized by the school to reassess its present programs and to plan for the future. The School of Education's self-study should serve as a primary source for the School to examine its philosophy of teaching, research, and service.

By the following processes an NCATE self-study, reaction report, and entire accrediting process can be further utilized by schools of education comparable in size and influence to the U-M School of Education. These processes are a logical basis for examining program characteristics of both undergraduate and graduate education, providing a means of identification in terms of student, faculty, and administration characteristics, and developing new organizational structures or identifying new funding priorities.

I. *Decision making by faculty and administration:*

A. The self-study can be used for evaluation of present goals and philosophy by a school of education. For example, the U-M School of Education is in the process of reassessing its graduate programs. Data contained in the NCATE report might provide a committee with quantitative and qualitative information pertaining to graduate teacher education, such as faculty profiles, program characteristics, admissions criteria, graduate placement, and success factors. This information would be useful in comparing Michigan graduate programs in teacher education to comparable programs in other universities.

B. The data can be further analyzed in terms of current issues facing teacher training programs. At present, the purpose and objectives of competency-based education models are being evaluated in schools of education, many of which are concerned about current teacher supply and demand and projections of the future. An NCATE self-study could provide a starting point from which to analyze a school's program components in terms of competency-based models and to understand better the present process for training undergraduates.

C. A management information system (MIS) could be developed to analyze faculty and student ideas and needs in terms of teacher preparation. For example, a questionnaire could be distributed to graduates of the last ten years, using the NCATE self-study as a basis from which to construct the instrument and analyze the responses.

D. The self-study and accreditation critique can be compared with similar efforts in other departments and schools within the university as well as with other institutions. These comparisons would provide an opportunity to assess how other departments or schools have prepared for accreditation and offer a means of comparing individual programs, goals, and objectives in terms of teacher education.

E. Each division and department not included in an NCATE evaluation could be asked to respond to the self-study and the accreditation process. Since many students and faculty in graduate programs in some schools of education are not associated with an NCATE-accredited program, this kind of assessment might be valuable in providing new insights.

II. *Facilitating improved communications:*

A. Committees already in existence, such as the Task Force on Innovation in Teacher Education at the School of Education, could be used as a vehicle to coordinate NCATE data and program and faculty responses in order to facilitate possible changes in teacher education.

B. Committees with broad representation from all areas of the university community, such as the U-M All-University Committee on Teacher Education and Certification, could meet more regularly to discuss teacher education and subject preparation for teacher education in relation to the NCATE process. In the future it may become imperative for schools of education to develop broader communication links with various areas of their universities to assist in the screening of students, the development of new programs, and the joint appointment of faculty. Such a network could utilize data in the self-study to assess the present and plan for the future.

C. New ways of reorganizing the present structure of teacher education — at all levels from administrators to program chairmen and in terms of program and faculty review — might be considered after an assessment of the NCATE data.

D. A self-study can be used for public relations purposes because it provides comprehensive descriptions of both program and faculty and student characteristics; much of this information is not available in other public statements or reports published by schools of education.

The objective of institutional research is to utilize data or manage information so that it can be evaluated and utilized to plan institutional change. The data contained in an NCATE self-study represent institutional information which can be analyzed further to serve as the basis for decision making. The difference between accreditation and institutional research lies in the fact that accrediting institutions such as NCATE are mainly concerned with evaluating procedural data and comparing it with prescribed and established standards, whereas institutional research is a way of gathering data on the various components of an institution and then either managing organizing or analyzing them in order to make a realistic decision concerning the present or future of the institution. Institutional research can take the form of highly sophisticated and analytical management information systems. Teacher evaluation has generally escaped the analysis employed by institutional research, but this report has examined how the NCATE process might be utilized in an institutional research format to bring about future formalized assessment and planning in undergraduate and graduate teacher education.

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[1]G.F. Zook and M.E. Haggerty, *The Evaluation of Higher Institutions, Vol. I: Principles of Accrediting Higher Institutions* (1936), as found in William K. Seldon, *Accreditation: A Struggle over Standards in Higher Education* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960).

[2]"Regional and Professional Accreditation," *Manual of Instructions for Evaluation and Accreditation*, National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 1971, 1.

[3]"What Is the NCATE," National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 1973, 2-3.

[4]*Ibid.*, 2.

[5]*Manual of Instructions for Evaluation and Accreditation*, 1971, 51.

[6]"NCATE Information Sheet," University of Michigan School of Education, 1972, 3.

[7]Wilbur J. Cohen, "Report to the President of the University for the Year 1972-73," *Innovator*, December 17, 1973, Vol. 5, 10.

[8]"NCATE Self-Study," memorandum, Frederick W. Bertolaet to the Faculty, November, 1972; "Reference File for NCATE," from William Dunifon, assistant to the dean, February 7, 1974.

[9]"Guide for Preparing the Institutional Report," National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 1971.

[10]"NCATE Team Visitation," University of Michigan, January 21-23, 1974.

[11]*Manual of Instructions for Evaluation and Accreditation*, 1971, 89.

[12]*Ibid.*, 91.

[13]"NCATE Team Visitation."

[14]*Ibid.*

[15]Paul L. Dressell, *Institutional Research in the University* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1971), 275.